OCCASIONAL PAPERS* - No. 49 August 25, 1935.

SOUTHERN FOREST EXPERIMENT STATION

E. L. Demmon, Director

New Orleans, La.

THE EXTENT OF TAX DEFAULT IN THE GULF STATES IN 1934

By

Ronald B. Craig, Associatė Forest Economist,

Southern Forest Experiment Station.

* - This series of publications releases data gathered in connection with investigations being carried on at the Southern Station. The information contained in them is subject to correction or amplification following further investigation. - Editor

THE EXTENT OF CHRONIC TAX DEFAULT IN THE GULF STATES IN 1934[1]

By

Ronald B. Craig, Associate Forest Economist,

Southern Forest Experiment Station.

On more than thirty-one million acres of rural land in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, eastern Oklahoma, and eastern Texas, the owners had failed to pay any taxes for the three or more years preceding 1934. Owing to numerous and involved legal technicalities which will not be discussed, only a relatively small portion of this vast area is in full public title and ownership or in the possession of a second private party following foreclosure of the tax lien by the State, County, or private purchaser of the tax certificate.

This paper gives the extent and location of the areas which were in tax default for this length of time in these eight states as units, with tables and a map (Figure 1) showing the distribution of this area by counties; discusses briefly the major causes of tax payment or tax default in each state, and draws a few major conclusions.

The period of three years is used as an index of chronic tax delinquency because in all these states except Louisiana[2] the law contemplates that after this lapse of time from the date of original failure to pay taxes, the State (or County in Georgia and Okahoma) or the purchaser of the tax certificate will foreclose the tax lien and obtain possession of the property of the original owner. Whether or not this final step in tax collection has been taken need not concern us here. Suffice it to say that the areas shown here are those outside of towns which were in tax default for three or more years; that is, those rural areas on which the taxes for 1933, 1932, and 1931, and possibly earlier years, had not been paid by 1934. The primary state-wide reasons for these conditions will be discussed under each state.

The distribution of the regional total of 31,502,000 acres of tax-defaulted land among the eight states is shown in Table 1, together with the percentage which each state's tax-defaulted area formed of its gross land area. It is at once obvious that there are very great differences among the states in extent of tax payments. Alabama, for example, has collected taxes during this period on all but 0.6 percent of its rural

---

[1] The data in this paper are based on reports and information from the following sources: (1), the Regional Office of the United States Forest Service, Atlanta, Georgia, in cooperation with the Land Policy Section of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, in connection with the report of these agencies to the National Resources Board; (2), U. S. Bureau of the Census; (3), the State Land Planning Consultants of the National Resources Board; (4), the State Agricultural Experiment Stations of Arkansas and Louisiana; (5), State Land Offices and Comptrollers - General; and (6), surveys and contacts made by the writer since December, 1931 in connection with the New Public Domain studies of the Southern Forest Experiment Station.

[2] In Louisiana, the redemption period is one year from date of the original tax-sale. At the end of that time, if the tax-certificate has been purchased by a private party, he can foreclose and take possession. If the certificate is held by the State, however, owner can always redeem.

area, while its neighbor state, Georgia, which is very similar in soil, resources, taxes and in social characteristics, failed to collect taxes on 12.0 percent of its area. Similarly eastern Texas had much better collections than eastern Oklahoma, the two regions again being very similar. Florida failed to collect taxes on 34.7 percent of its gross area; that is, on less than one acre out of every three. Why do these striking differences occur between states comparable in so many other respects? An attempt to answer this question will be made in the sections of this paper dealing with the individual states.

TABLE 1. -- *Area in tax default for three or more years, 1934*

State	Area in 3-year tax default	Percent of gross area of state in tax default
	-------Thousands of acres-------	
Alabama	181	0.6
Arkansas	2,843	8.5
Florida	12,192	34.7
Georgia	4,502	12.0
Louisiana	3,442 [1]	11.9
Mississippi	1,331	4.5
Eastern Oklahoma	3,518	34.0 [2]
Eastern Texas	3,493	17.6 [3]
Total	31,502	13.8 [4]

[1] As of November 15, 1934.
[2] Based on gross area of 17 counties in eastern part of state (10,356,480 acres)
[3] Based on gross area of 40 counties in eastern part of state (19,813,120 acres)
[4] Based on gross area of 228,033,000 acres.

Alabama

The situation in Alabama in respect to tax default is the best of any of the Gulf States. On only 180,653 acres were the taxes unpaid for three or more years as of August, 1934, or on less than 0.6 percent of the area of the state. Fourteen of the 67 counties had no land at all that had reached this stage of delinquency, and 12 others had less than 0.05 percent of their area chronically delinquent. Only 10 counties had 1.0 percent or more of their area in this class, the greatest default being in Mobile County, with 54,030 acres, or 6.9 percent of its area. Most of this default has occurred since 1930, but exact figures on a yearly basis are not available.

The reasons for this low degree of chronic delinquency are very probably found in the following factors: First, relatively fair taxes, ranging on rural land not in actual use for crops from 3½ to 12 cents per acre per year, and proportionately low on crop and other improved land; and second, but perhaps most important, strict enforce-

ment of tax laws with high interest rates on deliquent taxes, (8 percent), plus penalty,

page 3

PERCEN

COMPILED

ment of tax laws with high interest rates on deliquent taxes, (8 percent), plus penalty, and actual forfeiture to state title of delinquent land following two years of unpaid taxes, without recourse to further legal action. While the present depression undoubtedly affected the property owners of Alabama, the conditions listed above prevented excessive tax default.

TABLE 2. -- *Areas in tax default for three or more years as of August, 1934*

ALABAMA

County	Gross land area	Area in tax default [1]		County	Gross land area	Area in tax default [1]	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*		*Acres*	*Acres*	*Percent*
Antauga	373,760	391	0.1	Jackson	729,600	2,720	0.4
Baldwin	1,020,800	17,219	1.7	Jefferson	716,800	2,724	0.4
Barbour	583,680		0.0	Lamar	384,640	40	*
Bibb	405,760	1,612	0.4	Lauderdale	444,160	1,107	0.2
Blount	415,360	6,077	1.5	Lawrence	448,000	758	0.2
Bullock	390,400		0.0	Lee	389,120		0.0
Butler	488,320		0.0	Limestone	381,440	1,396	0.4
Calhoun	393,600	2,165	0.6	Lowndes	472,960	20	*
Chambers	391,680		0.0	Macon	392,960		0.0
Cherokee	369,280	160	*	Madison	519,040	1,075	0.2
Chilton	456,320	142	*	Marengo	618,240	455	0.1
Choctaw	596,480	353	0.1	Marion	475,580	2,570	0.5
Clarke	778,240	3,492	0.4	Marshall	385,280	2,389	0.6
Clay	392,960	45	*	Mobile	784,640	54,030	6.9
Cleburne	364,160	2,405	0.7	Monroe	647,680	353	0.1
Coffee	433,920	5,755	1.3	Montgomery	515,200	1,395	0.3
Colbert	395,520	3,816	1.0	Morgan	375,680	349	0.1
Conecuh	543,360	43	*	Perry	471,680	442	0.1
Coosa	419,200	40	*	Pickens	560,000	2,666	0.5
Covington	666,880	3,589	0.5	Pike	429,440		0.0
Crenshaw	395,520		0.0	Randolph	377,600		0.0
Cullman	488,320	360	0.1	Russell	419,200	11,581	2.8
Dale	360,320	100	*	St. Clair	414,720	3,778	0.9
Dallas	612,480	2,555	0.4	Shelby	524,160	13,213	2.5
DeKalb	503,040	1,611	0.3	Sumter	581,120	82	*
Elmore	405,760		0.0	Talladega	483,200	6,272	1.3
Escambia	612,480	13	*	Tallapoosa	488,320	583	0.1
Etowah	345,600	90	*	Tuscaloosa	861,440	52	*
Fayette	411,520	339	0.1	Walker	506,880	3,210	0.6
Franklin	414,080		0.0	Washington	695,680	72	*
Geneva	369,920	3,306	0.9	Wilcox	573,440		0.0
Greene	406,400		0.0	Winston	403,200	4,198	1.0
Hale	413,440		0.0				
Henry	358,400	4,045	1.1	State	32,818,560	180,653	0.6
Houston	370,560	3,400	0.9				

* Less than 0.05 percent.

[1] From data supplied by Regional Office, U. S. Forest Service, in connection with National Resources Board Report.

There are, of course, many areas in the State which are delinquent for one or two years' taxes but these rarely reach the permanently delinquent stage, being redeemed prior to forfeiture. An estimate made by the U. S. Bureau of the Census[3] showed that 11.5 percent of the real estate taxes due in 1933 were delinquent as of December, 1933 in Alabama. This state ranked next to lowest in percent of current delinquency among the eight Gulf States.

The distribution by counties of land in tax default for three or more years is shown in Table 2.

Arkansas

This state had 2,842,809 acres in tax default for three or more years as of January 1, 1934, equivalent to 8.5 percent of its gross area. Of this total, 1,448,003 acres, or 50.9 percent had actually been certified to state title, and 1,394,806 acres were due to be certified but had not been, owing to the failure of county clerks to comply with the law.[4]

No county in Arkansas failed to have at least 0.5 percent of its area in tax default for three or more years. The greatest percentage of area in this class in any one county was 26.3 percent in Poinsett County. It is evident that the greatest concentration of chronic delinquency is in the Delta counties, with a secondary concentration in the north-central and northwestern mountain counties. Default is least in the south-central counties in the shortleaf-loblolly pine-hardwood type. (See Figure 1 and Table 3.) The report previously referred to shows that 20 percent of the taxes due in 1933 in Arkansas were delinquent as of December of that year. Arkansas ranked fifth among the eight states in ascending the percentage of currently delinquent taxes.

The causes of tax default, other than those attributable to legal and fiscal maladministration, vary, of course, in the several sections of this state. In the 18 Delta counties, the chief cause is the confiscatory taxes levied by the special improvement districts for drainage and levee maintenance and for debt service on the tremendous indebtedness outstanding in these districts. These special taxes occasionally run as high as $3.80 per acre per year, over and above the state, county, school, and road ad valorem taxes. In the north-central and northwestern mountain counties one of the chief causes of tax forfeiture is the overcutting and denudation of the forests. The low productivity of the mountain soils; the lack of adequate protection from fire in the past, and in certain areas, even today; and a complete exploitation of many stands amounting to clear-cutting, has reduced the forests to a point where private ownership is no longer economically feasible. The depression, of course, greatly aggravated these conditions and resulted in greatly increased default since 1930. The reverse of the forest condition cited for the mountain counties accounts in large measure for the low percentage of delinquency in the south-central counties. Here, a large share of the forest area is federally or corporately owned, soil productivity for the forest growth is high, and the fundamentals of forestry are practiced in both protection and cutting on much of the area.

---

[3] U. S. Bureau of the Census - Division of Real Estate Taxation. Current tax delinquency - Part I: All states, tabulated on County basis - Levies of 1932-33: pp. 6-7, Washington, D. C. 1934.

[4] Brannen, C. O. Tax Delinquent Rural Lands in Arkansas. 63 pp. Fayetteville, Ark. 1934. (Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 311).

TABLE 3 -- *Areas certified, or subject to certification, to state title as of January 1, 1934*

ARKANSAS

County	Gross land area	Forfeited and certified [1]	Forfeited but uncertified [2]	Total forfeited area [3]	County area [4]
	Acres				*Percent*
Arkansas	640,000	14,462	53,616	68,078	10.6
Ashley	601,600	11,602	184	11,786	2.0
Baxter	375,040	6,903	8,955	15,858	4.2
Benton	560,640	48,171	31,305	79,476	14.2
Boone	389,120	6,954	1,089	8,043	2.1
Bradley	421,760	793	1,257	2,050	0.5
Calhoun	402,560	414	2,023	2,437	0.6
Carroll	410,240	2,812	3,436	6,248	1.5
Chicot	388,480	36,485	24,295	60,780	15.6
Clark	564,480	5,894	14,600	20,494	3.6
Clay	418,560	14,443	18,135	32,578	7.8
Cleburne	381,440	21,900	3,585	25,485	6.7
Cleveland	385,920	2,861	833	3,694	1.0
Columbia	502,400	3,186	17,233	20,419	4.1
Conway	360,320	22,346	29,242	51,588	14.3
Craighead	439,680	66,603	44,262	110,865	25.1
Crawford	379,520	12,369	14,046	26,415	7.0
Crittenden	372,480	20,789	23,867	44,656	12.0
Cross	396,160	15,338	41,498	56,836	14.3
Dallas	434,560	13,221	184	13,405	3.1
Desha	478,080	53,627	55,060	108,687	22.7
Drew	542,080	3,412	---	3,412	0.6
Faulkner	416,640	6,698	14,786	21,484	5.2
Franklin	387,840	19,125	3,990	23,115	6.0
Fulton	400,000	15,654	731	16,385	4.1
Garland	472,320	11,515	3,157	14,672	3.1
Grant	407,680	4,693	2,794	7,487	1.8
Greene	359,040	25,991	21,544	47,535	13.2
Hempstead	465,280	10,680	---	10,680	2.3
Hot Springs	392,320	5,384	2,348	7,732	2.0
Howard	385,280	11,829	---	11,82*	93.1*
Independence	487,680	18,665	1,198	19,863	4.1
Izard	373,120	18,297	3,117	21,414	5.7
Jackson	405,760	9,317	30,084	39,401	9.7
Jefferson	577,920	24,409	56,888	81,297	14.1
Johnson	432,000	26,788	7,116	33,904	7.8
Lafayette	336,000	5,819	723	6,542	1.9
Lawrence	378,880	9,143	48,641	57,784	15.3
Lee	384,640	23,103	56,333	79,436	20.7
Lincoln	365,440	15,646	26,483	42,129	11.5
Little River	349,440	12,934	19,413	32,347	9.3
Logan	464,640	21,391	22,911	44,302	9.5
Lonoke	516,480	9,110	41,884	50,994	9.9

*** These figures should be 11,829 acres, and 3.1 percent.**

(Continued on following page)

TABLE 3 -- *Areas certified, or subject to certification, to state title as of January 1, 1934*--Cont'd.

ARKANSAS

County	Gross land area	Forfeited and certified [1]	Forfeited but uncertified [2]	Total forfeited area [3]	County area [4]
	Acres				*Percent*
Madison	535,040	90,271	5,455	95,726	17.9
Marion	413,440	9,365	6,587	15,952	3.9
Miller	398,720	4,877	34,905	39,782	10.0
Mississippi	506,880	106,648	7,511	114,159	22.5
Monroe	385,920	14,611	27,325	41,936	10.9
Montgomery	501,760	8,210	11,701	19,911	4.0
Nevada	396,800	3,241	13,196	16,437	4.1
Newton	541,440	45,161	2,750	47,911	8.8
Ouachita	469,120	12,146	9,490	21,636	4.6
Perry	353,280	10,548	11,629	22,177	6.3
Phillips	442,880	55,528	51,984	107,512	24.3
Pike	384,640	3,924	7,316	11,240	2.9
Poinsett	461,440	12,627	108,852	121,479	26.3
Polk	541,440	14,049	66	14,115	2.6
Pope	529,920	8,050	39,729	47,779	9.0
Prairie	423,680	17,839	5,555	23,394	5.5
Pulaski	498,560	5,521	35,214	40,735	8.2
Randolph	418,560	19,440	115	19,555	4.7
Saline	475,520	15,967	---	15,967	3.4
Scott	620,800	17,704	320	18,024	2.9
Searcy	430,720	17,228	13,974	31,202	7.2
Sebastian	339,840	17,652	3,587	21,239	6.2
Sevier	366,080	8,626	16,195	24,821	6.8
Sharp	389,760	17,028	10,332	27,360	7.0
St. Francis	401,920	15,770	42,627	58,397	14.5
Stone	391,040	28,143	3,440	31,583	8.1
Union	670,720	7,808	377	8,185	1.2
Van Buren	467,200	11,454	44,831	56,285	12.0
Washington	611,200	105,790	39,941	145,731	23.8
White	663,680	7,805	41,620	49,425	7.4
Woodruff	369,280	10,894	33,363	44,257	12.0
Yell	611,200	33,302	11,973	45,275	7.4
State	33,616,000	1,448,003	1,394,806	2,842,809	8.5

[1] From data supplied in part by Professor Orville J. Hall, Department of Rural Economics and Sociology, Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

[2] Computed from data supplied in part by Dr. C. O. Brannen, Acting Dean and Director, Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station.

[3] Sum of two preceding columns.

[4] Ratio of area forfeited to gross land area (in percent).

Florida

The situation in respect to tax default in Florida is more serious than in any other southern state. As of August, 1934 there was in tax default for three or more years the huge total of approximately 12,192,000 acres or 34.7 percent of the gross land area of the state. (See Table 4.) No county in Florida has less than 1.9 percent of its area in this class, and one county, St. Lucie, had 83.6 percent. As shown in Figure 1, the greatest concentrations of chronic delinquency were along the East Coast, and in Taylor County on the West Coast and Sumter County in Central Florida. Fifty-four of the 67 counties in the state had at least 20 perent of their areas in tax default beyond the redemption period. The current delinquency as of December, 1933, for taxes of 1932, was 36 percent, largest in the South, and fourth from largest in the entire nation, being exceeded only by Illinois (37 percent), North Dakota (37.5 percent), and Michigan (40.5 percent).

The causes of this serious condition are primarily related to fiscal maladministration, coupled with the aftermath of the 1924-1926 real-estate "boom," during which heavy bond issues were floated, based on "watered" valuations. When the boom crashed, the counties, cities, and other taxing districts were left with an enormous outstanding bonded debt, requiring heavy taxes for debt service. The extent of this indebtedness can best be illustrated by comparison of the gross debt less sinking fund assets of the state and its political subdivisions with their total assessed valuation. As of 1931, the gross debt of all units of government (state, counties, cities and towns, special school districts, and other civil divisions) less sinking fund assets was $513,022,000 or $337.74 per capita. The total assessed valuation of all property (real, personal, utility, and miscellaneous); that is, the total assessable tax-base of the state in 1931, was $520,454,000, or $342.63 per capita. [5] Obviously if the gross debt less sinking fund assets is 98.5 percent of the total valuation, debt service alone is going to require confiscatory taxes. This is an actual and seemingly unavoidable condition in Florida today and has resulted in a virtual refusal to pay taxes in many sections. Since 1926, the area sold annually for non-payment of taxes increased steadily until 1933 when it decreased slightly with a reduction in tax rates. The land in tax default is being used in many cases by its record owners in defiance of any attempt of the state to foreclose its tax title. Indeed, it is obvious that the State cannot proceed in foreclosure without disrupting, if not destroying, local government. The state administration is endeavoring to find a way out of the dilemma, but the difficulties are very great.

Georgia

The extent of tax default in Georgia varies greatly among the 159 counties with which this state is afflicted. As of August, 1934, there was in tax default for three or more years, a total of 4,501,922 acres, or 12.0 percent of the gross land area of the state. Thirty-five counties had no land in this class, whereas two counties had 74.2 percent and 75.2 percent respectively of their area in tax default beyond the redemption period. Twenty-six counties had 20 percent or more of their area in tax default. (See table 5.)

---

[5] U. S. Bureau of the Census: Financial Statistics of State and Local Government - 1931 - Florida. 34 pp. Washington D.C. 1934.

TABLE 4. -- *Areas in tax default for three or more years as of August, 1934*[1]

FLORIDA

County	Gross land area	Area in tax default	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*
Alachua	579,840	175,000	30.2
Baker	379,520	20,000	5.3
Bay	499,840	250,805	50.2
Bradford	186,240	34,000	18.3
Brevard	656,000	259,000	39.5
Broward	775,680	198,994	25.6
Calhoun	339,840	108,700	32.0
Charlotte	446,080	190,000	42.6
Citrus	396,800	196,872	49.6
Clay	393,600	172,000	43.7
Collier	1,306,880	25,070	1.9
Columbia	506,880	61,150	12.1
Dade	1,292,160	484,166	37.5
DeSoto	409,600	64,000	15.6
Dixie	454,400	110,051	24.2
Duval	500,480	298,357	59.6
Escambia	420,480	139,000	33.0
Flagler	314,240	237,232	75.5
Franklin	346,240	68,500	19.8
Gadsden	345,600	9,655	2.8
Gilchrist	224,640	76,000	33.8
Glades	488,960	189,592	38.8
Gulf	357,120	42,850	12.0
Hamilton	337,920	137,839	40.8
Hardee	404,480	213,818	52.9
Hendry	749,440	73,643	9.8
Hernando	318,080	146,500	46.0
Highlands	653,440	294,385	45.0
Hillsborough	663,040	245,430	37.0
Holmes	302,720	85,000	28.1
Indian River	318,080	76,500	24.0
Jackson	600,960	77,221	12.8
Jefferson	339,200	116,800	34.4
Lafayette	353,920	193,000	54.5
Lake	670,080	391,000	58.4
Lee	523,520	113,200	21.6
Leon	457,600	145,586	31.8
Levy	734,720	141,110	19.2
Liberty	526,720	33,294	6.3
Madison	495,360	252,000	50.9
Manatee	526,720	284,001	53.9
Marion	1,054,080	433,715	41.1
Martin	382,720	62,300	16.3
Monroe	704,000	188,026	26.7
Nassau	403,200	102,074	25.3

(Continued on following page)

TABLE 4. -- *Areas in tax default for three or more years as of August, 1934*[1]--Cont'd.

FLORIDA

County	Gross land area	Area in tax default	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*
Okaloosa	611,840	313,715	51.3
Okeechobee	478,080	33,783	7.1
Orange	594,560	252,904	42.5
Osceola	867,840	255,288	29.4
Palm Beach	1,241,600	407,389	32.8
Pasco	490,880	213,672	43.5
Pinellas	187,520	84,000	44.8
Polk	1,220,480	268,821	22.0
Putnam	481,280	275,175	57.2
St. Johns	389,120	288,211	74.1
St. Lucie	371,200	310,400	83.6
Santa Rosa	656,000	272,213	41.5
Sarasota	328,960	60,858	18.5
Seminole	205,440	66,000	32.1
Sumter	373,120	237,875	63.8
Suwannee	442,880	178,229	40.2
Taylor	668,800	405,078	60.6
Union	158,720	40,851	25.7
Volusia	718,720	415,666	57.8
Wakulla	385,280	103,000	26.7
Walton	700,800	274,436	39.2
Washington	396,800	217,000	54.7
State	35,111,040	12,192,000	34.7

[1] Compiled from data obtained by Regional Office, U.S. Forest Service, Atlanta, Ga., in connection with National Resources Board Report, and from Reports of Comptroller-General of Florida.

The areas of greatest chronic delinquency comprise the two following groups of south Georgia counties extending in a generally northeast and southwest direction; namely; (1), Dodge, Wilcox, Crisp, Turner, Worth, Lee, Dougherty, Calhoun, and Baker; and (2), Long, Wayne, Pierce, Atkinson, Berrien, Cook, Lanier, and Echols. (See Figure 1.) The northernmost of these groups corresponds with an area of deep sands covered with sparse growth of longleaf pine and scrub oak. Most of the good timber has been removed, and subsequent fires have so reduced soil productivity that private ownership of the remaining forest land is not profitable, even under the low taxes levied upon it. Agricultural crop production has also declined owning to the poor soils, increased competition from better sections, and the ravages of the cotton boll weevil.

TABLE 5. -- *Area in tax default for three or more years as of August, 1934*

GEORGIA

County	Gross land area	Area in tax default [1]		County	Gross land area	Area in tax default [1]	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*		*Acres*	*Acres*	*Percent*
Appling	290,560	28,856	9.9	DeKalb	174,080	---	0.0
Atkinson	211,200	156,782	74.2	Dodge	275,840	135,984	49.3
Bacon	173,440	34,432	19.9	Dooly	254,080	19,413	7.6
Baker	228,480	103,040	45.1	Dougherty	218,880	63,513	29.0
Baldwin	196,480	5,817	3.0	Douglas	133,120	6,565	4.9
Banks	142,080	---	0.0	Early	335,360	26,602	7.9
Barrow	107,520	10,755	10.0	Echols	231,680	161,269	69.6
Bartow	301,440	14,904	4.9	Effingham	286,720	142,190	49.6
Ben Hill	163,840	24,141	14.7	Elbert	231,040	4,548	2.0
Berrien	291,200	105,000	36.1	Emanuel	488,960	24,141	4.9
Bibb	177,280	16,968	9.6	Evans	183,680	45,587	24.8
Bleckley	131,200	25,899	19.7	Fannin	256,040	---	0.0
Brantley	277,760	32,394	11.7	Fayette	149,760	14,810	9.9
Brooks	328,960	24,724	7.5	Floyd	321,280	31,639	9.8
Bryan	275,840	52,093	18.9	Forsyth	158,080	---	0.0
Bulloch	427,520	---	0.0	Franklin	178,560	8,683	4.9
Burke	611,840	60,788	9.9	Fulton	123,520	10,085	8.2
Butts	129,920	17,428	13.4	Gilmer	281,600	---	0.0
Calhoun	181,760	71,605	39.4	Glascock	108,800	5,395	5.0
Camden	455,040	17,959	3.9	Glynn	280,960	27,095	9.6
Campbell	135,040	6,638	4.9	Gordon	240,000	20,470	8.5
Candler	145,920	14,467	9.9	Grady	284,160	28,194	9.9
Carroll	314,880	---	0.0	Greene	266,240	5,148	1.9
Catoosa	108,160	9,146	8.5	Gwinnett	281,600	13,830	4.9
Charlton	506,880	33,418	6.6	Habersham	185,600	---	0.0
Chatham	236,800	44,550	18.8	Hall	279,680	---	0.0
Chattahoochee	139,520	---	0.0	Hancock	339,200	16,848	5.0
Chattooga	209,920	20,737	9.9	Haralson	181,760	---	0.0
Cherokee	274,560	27,177	9.9	Harris	320,640	---	0.0
Clarke	72,960	3,396	4.7	Hart	167,040	8,228	4.9
Clay	129,920	---	0.0	Heard	182,400	64,358	35.3
Clayton	90,880	4,448	4.9	Henry	207,360	10,206	4.9
Clinch	478,080	72,759	15.2	Houston	283,520	14,048	5.0
Cobb	225,920	11,015	4.9	Irwin	241,920	11,990	5.0
Coffee	404,480	40,103	9.9	Jackson	227,200	11,130	4.9
Colquitt	338,560	33,395	9.9	Jasper	205,440	20,276	9.9
Columbia	224,000	4,445	2.0	Jeff Davis	192,000	19,052	9.9
Cook	154,240	53,048	34.4	Jefferson	413,440	40,891	9.9
Coweta	283,520	---	0.0	Jenkins	218,880	10,823	4.9
Crawford	204,160	---	0.0	Johnson	186,880	17,799	9.5
Crisp	177,280	65,996	37.2	Jones	241,280	47,869	19.8
Dade	119,040	5,902	5.0	Lamar	117,760	13,007	11.0
Dawson	138,240	---	0.0	Lanier	122,240	24,358	19.9
Decatur	373,120	36,838	9.9	Laurens	515,840	---	0.0

(Continued on following page)

TABLE 5. -- *Area in tax default for three or more years as of August, 1934*--Cont'd.

GEORGIA

County	Gross land area	Area in tax default [1]		County	Gross land area	Area in tax default [1]	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*		*Acres*	*Acres*	*Percent*
Lee	208,640	62,074	29.8	Seminole	153,600	7,334	4.8
Liberty	347,520	34,585	10.0	Spalding	133,760	---	0.0
Lincoln	186,240	18,547	10.0	Stephens	106,240	---	0.0
Long	251,520	100,312	39.9	Stewart	263,040	30,988	11.8
Lowndes	309,120	6,081	2.0	Sumter	291,840	41,999	14.4
Lumpkin	179,200	---	0.0	Talbot	199,680	---	0.0
McDuffee	183,680	---	0.0	Taliaferro	135,680	33,660	24.8
McIntosh	300,800	---	0.0	Tattnall	298,240	57,833	19.4
Macon	212,480	---	0.0	Taylor	217,600	21,574	9.9
Madison	181,760	17,966	9.9	Telfair	238,720	47,108	19.7
Marion	230,400	45,807	19.9	Terrell	206,080	4,065	2.0
Meriweather	317,440	---	0.0	Thomas	339,200	26,617	7.8
Miller	161,920	40,153	24.8	Tift	155,520	15,175	9.8
Milton	87,680	4,370	5.0	Toombs	251,520	19,880	7.9
Mitchell	350,720	34,654	9.9	Towns	115,840	1,434	1.2
Monroe	300,800	---	0.0	Treutlen	167,680	---	0.0
Montgomery	121,600	29,961	24.6	Troup	278,400	---	0.0
Morgan	249,600	13,699	5.5	Turner	147,840	58,112	39.3
Murray	218,880	9,385	4.3	Twiggs	200,960	69,738	34.7
Muscogee	150,400	---	0.0	Union	207,360	---	0.0
Newton	167,680	8,228	4.9	Upson	202,880	---	0.0
Oconee	110,080	23,874	21.7	Walker	276,480	13,507	4.9
Oglethorpe	322,560	16,054	5.0	Walton	211,840	10,409	4.9
Paulding	207,360	10,265	5.0	Ware	493,440	133,490	27.1
Peach	114,560	---	0.0	Warren	258,560	6,524	2.5
Pickens	147,840	---	0.0	Washington	428,160	61,628	14.4
Pierce	220,800	165,968	75.2	Wayne	393,600	194,949	49.5
Pike	151,680	5,465	3.6	Webster	193,280	48,107	24.9
Polk	202,880	9,947	4.9	Wheeler	168,960	33,537	19.8
Pulaski	165,120	32,815	19.9	White	156,800	8,422	5.4
Putnam	231,040	22,941	9.9	Whitfield	181,120	8,928	4.9
Quitman	92,160	---	0.0	Wilcox	257,920	62,319	24.2
Rabun	241,280	34,093	14.1	Wilkes	293,120	28,992	9.9
Randolph	263,680	52,262	19.8	Wilkinson	302,080	44,794	14.8
Richmond	204,160	9,872	4.8	Worth	416,640	124,047	29.8
Rockdale	76,160	---	0.0				
Schley	98,560	9,772	9.9	State	37,584,000	4,501,922	12.0
Screven	508,160	50,495	9.9				

[1] From data supplied by Regional Office, U. S. Forest Service, in connection with National Resources Board Report.

The southern group of counties referred to above, however, lies in the richest area of timber in the state, if not in the entire South. From these counties and those surrounding them comes a large share of the nation's production of naval stores. Much of the forest area is corporately owned in large holdings of from 20,000 to over 100,000 acres each. Delinquency here is caused primarily by two factors. While detailed annual records are not readily available, the majority of this default has arisen since 1930. Since that date the price of naval stores has fallen steadily, reaching in 1933 the lowest point in more than a quarter of a century. Inasmuch as naval stores are the chief source of income for the landowners of this region, the low price for these products provided a good argument for non-payment of taxes if operations were to be sustained. As a result, taxes went unpaid. The second reason, almost a corollary of the first, is that the owners realized that non-payment of taxes did not mean loss of their property. It is obvious that this condition could not obtain if the counties, to which tax title goes on default of payment, exercised their right of foreclosure of their tax liens.

That they do not do so anywhere in Georgia is well known. The total area in this state actually in county title through foreclosure of tax liens is probably less than 100,000acres, according to estimates made to the writer in 1933 by several state officials. There are two major reasons for this condition. First, under Georgia law the county is liable, immediately on foreclosure of its tax lien, for all the state taxes levied on the foreclosed property. Obviously those counties which are seriously involved in delinquency cannot afford, with their limited liquid capital, to refund the state taxes on any extensive area of tax-forfeited land. They cannot foreclose on one property without foreclosing on all in default; hence, they do not foreclose on any. Second, the counties realize that in the long run these delinquent taxes will probably be paid or compromised. Hence they considered it better business to let the delinquencies run for several years than to foreclose and be the holder of a large acreage of unworked land. [6]

In percent of current 1933 delinquency, Georgia, with 13.5 percent, ranked fourth among the eight states.

Louisiana

The data on Louisiana are on a slightly different basis from those in the states previously discussed. As stated in Table 6, these data represent the net area adjudicated to state title for non-payment of taxes as of November 15, 1934, and are based on data collected by the State Land Planning Consultant of the National Resources Board, from an audit of the records of the State Land Office. They do not represent exactly the area in tax default for three or more years, since rural land in Louisiana has a one-year redemption period if the tax-certificate is held by a private party, but an unlimited redemption period if it is held by the State.

As of November 15, 1934 there were 3,441,860 acres tax forfeited, or 11.9 percent of the gross area of the state. Data on Orleans Parish, which is contiguous with the City of New Orleans, are not included since this parish technically contains no rural land. No parish had less than 0.1 percent of its area forfeited, and only four

---

[6] Fullilove, W.T. Tax delinquency of rural farm lands in fifty-two Georgia counties. 5 pp. Experiment, Ga., - 1935. (Georgia Agricultural Experiment Station Press Release No. 406.)

had less than 1.0 percent. Eleven of the 63 parishes had 20.0 percent or more of their area adjudicated. The greatest percentage of adjudicated land was in Tangipahoa Parish, of which 57.7 percent was in state title.

The greatest concentrations of forfeiture, other than those in Tangipahoa and St. Martin Parishes, were in the cut-over longleaf pine region of west-central Louisiana, and in the lower Mississippi River Delta. In the former section, forfeiture is primarily due to the removal of the original timber in clear-cutting operations, coupled with high taxes on the bare land, occasioned by heavy bonded indebtedness for roads and schools. In one ward of Vernon parish in 1932 the total tax millage (state, parish, road, school, and bond taxes) reached the astounding sum of 312 mills per dollar of valuation. At the average valuation of $3.00 per acre for cut-over land, this meant that the land, which could return no income, was taxed at a rate of 94 cents per acre per year.

The forfeiture in the Delta was very spotted, some parishes such as West Carroll and Madison showing almost no delinquency to the point of forfeiture while others such as Avoyelles, Plaquemines, and Concordia showed forfeiture of from 16 to 25 percent of their area. In the absence of definite knowledge of the reasons for this condition, it can only be assumed that forfeiture in the Delta is due to levying of high special improvement district taxes, and to difficulty of, or indifference to, collection.

In respect to current 1933 delinquency, Louisiana, with only 7 percent, ranked first in the South, and second in the nation. Massachusetts, with but 6 percent, ranked first in the nation.

TABLE 6. -- *Rural areas adjudicated to State for non-payment of taxes, as of November 15, 1934*[1]

LOUISIANA

Parish	Gross land area	Area adjudicated to State	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*
Acadia	414,080	38,357	9.3
Allen	424,320	37,680	8.9
Ascension	186,240	11,170	6.0
Assumption	309,760	15,975	5.2
Avoyelles	542,080	135,435	24.6
Beauregard	750,080	168,487	22.5
Bienville	542,720	163,646	30.2
Bossier	552,320	40,509	7.3
Caddo	563,200	35,155	6.2
Calcasieu	695,040	145,588	21.0
Caldwell	339,840	6,380	1.9
Cameron	960,640	65,665	6.8
Catahoula	459,520	39,140	8.5
Claiborne	497,920	11,559	2.3
Concordia	456,960	74,501	16.3
De Soto	558,080	20,563	3.7
East Baton Rouge	291,200	27,115	9.3
East Carroll	268,800	31,125	11.6
East Feliciana	296,960	2,469	0.8
Evangeline	435,840	43,726	10.0

(Continued on following page)

TABLE 6. -- *Rural areas adjudicated to State for non-payment of taxes, as of November 15, 1934*[1] Cont'd.

LOUISIANA

Parish	Gross land area	Area adjudicated to State	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*
Franklin	403,200	12,718	3.2
Grant	437,120	10,499	2.4
Iberia	376,960	29,691	7.9
Iberville	373,760	2,033	0.5
Jackson	369,920	15,723	4.2
Jefferson	272,640	32,653	12.0
Jefferson Davis	466,560	70,133	15.0
Lafayette	178,560	23,181	13.0
Lafourche	634,240	5,599	0.9
La Salle	409,600	118,701	29.0
Lincoln	302,080	9,855	3.3
Livingston	423,680	63,784	15.0
Madison	416,000	582	0.1
Morehouse	531,840	23,952	4.5
Natchitoches	824,960	212,997	25.8
Ouachita	410,880	18,198	4.4
Plaquemines	644,480	128,994	20.0
Pointe Coupee	368,840	36,101	9.8
Rapides	876,600	128,994	14.7
Red River	256,000	11,315	4.4
Richland	361,500	35,651	9.9
Sabine	652,800	45,723	7.0
St. Bernard	394,880	107,389	27.2
St. Charles	188,800	21,807	11.6
St. Helena	268,800	13,742	5.1
St. James	162,560	13,094	8.0
St. John	147,840	15,724	10.6
St. Landry	616,960	109,170	17.7
St. Martin	336,000	152,552	45.4
St. Mary	404,480	36,087	8.9
St. Tammany	579,840	70,906	12.2
Tangipahoa	505,600	291,548	57.7
Tensas	404,480	26,321	6.5
Terrebonne	1,123,840	15,981	1.4
Union	587,520	66,066	11.2
Vermillion	776,320	61,912	8.0
Vernon	874,880	240,903	27.5
Washington	419,200	13,048	3.1
Webster	389,760	11,423	2.9
West Baton Rouge	136,960	3,992	2.9
West Carroll	234,240	265	0.1
West Feliciana	225,280	2,142	1.0
Winn	620,160	18,463	3.0
State	28,936,320	3,441,860	11.9

(See footnotes on following page)

Mississippi

The data shown in Table 7 for Mississippi represent the area listed as in state title for non-payment of taxes on the records of the Commissioner of State Lands, as of January 1, 1934, as compiled by the State Land Planning Consultant, Mr. C. O. Henderson. They are equivalent to the data for other states (except Louisiana), and show the area in tax default for three or more years. As of this date, there were 1,331,116 acres of land forfeited for taxes, or 4.5 percent of the gross land area of the state. No county had less than 0.05 percent of its area forfeited, while one county, Issaquena, had 35.7 percent, and another, Stone, had 20.5 percent of its area in state title. These two were the only counties with as much as 20 percent of their area tax-forfeited.

The greatest concentration of forfeiture was in the southeastern part of the State, in the cut-over longleaf pine belt, and in the Mississippi River (Yazoo) Delta. In the former region, forfeiture is primarily due to the removal of the original timber, the principal tax base, coupled with high taxes on the denuded land. Due to over-lapping of a very large number of taxing units - school districts, road districts, improvement districts, both general and special, in addition to the state and county taxes, the tax per acre on this cut-over land frequently averages 20 to 30 cents per acre per year. One 80-acre farm in Harrison County paid ten separate levies totalling 70½ mills per dollar of valuation. This example is by no means unique. A considerable area of this land in southeastern Mississippi has recently been acquired by the Federal Government as a National Forest.

The forfeiture in the Yazoo Delta, as in other portions of the Delta in other states, is primarily due to drainage and levee acreage taxes piled on top of ad valorem taxes. This condition has been discussed in connection with the Arkansas Delta delinquency with which the situation in the Yazoo Delta is closely comparable.

Minor concentrations of forfeiture occur in the Iron Hills (Webster, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Counties) and in the longleaf-loblolly pine belt of southwestern Mississippi - (Franklin and Lincoln Counties).

In respect to current 1933 delinquency, Mississippi, with 12 percent, ranks third among the eight Gulf States.

Oklahoma

The data in Table 8 for Oklahoma relate only to seventeen timbered counties in the eastern part of the state and to the area in tax default for three or more years as of 1934. A very considerable degree of tax default obtains thorughout the prairie counties but with that portion of the state lying west of the "central cross-timbers" this paper is not concerned. The area covered by the survey is indicated by the heavy boundary lines in Figure 1. Two isolated timbered counties, Creek, in the "Central cross-timbers" and Carter, in the Arbuckle Mountains, are also included.

(Footnotes for preceding page)

[1] Data supplied by State Land Planning Consultant, National Resources Board.
[2] Excluding Orleans Parish.

TABLE 7. -- *Total state-owned lands as of January 1, 1934*

MISSISSIPPI [1]

County	Gross land area	Area of state-owned lands	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*
Adams	272,640	152	.05
Alcorn	247,040	2,112	.85
Amite	456,960	20,781	4.5
Attala	457,600	17,332	3.8
Benton	253,440	2,799	1.1
Bolivar	562,560	22,587	4.0
Calhoun	370,560	21,978	5.9
Carroll	399,360	9,227	2.3
Chickasaw	320,640	32,836	10.3
Choctaw	264,960	26,543	10.2
Claiborne	312,960	13,490	4.3
Clarke	432,000	13,110	3.1
Clay	261,120	25,568	9.8
Coahoma	339,200	12,651	3.8
Copiah	492,160	9,828	1.9
Covington	262,400	12,986	4.9
DeSoto	304,000	1,966	.65
Forest	295,680	12,132	4.1
Franklin	350,080	19,010	5.4
George	304,000	44,404	14.6
Greene	454,400	41,602	9.1
Grenada	282,880	8,717	3.1
Hancock	300,160	10,902	3.6
Harrison	364,800	25,081	6.9
Hinds	549,120	3,857	.6
Holmes	480,640	17,791	3.7
Humphreys	261,120	31,449	12.0
Issaquena	259,840	92,561	35.7
Itawamba	338,560	17,422	5.2
Jackson	454,400	45,633	10.1
Jasper	426,880	3,667	.9
Jefferson	324,480	2,644	.8
Jeff Davis	258,560	5,527	2.1
Jones	445,440	10,773	2.4
Kemper	481,280	15,791	3.3
Lafayette	424,960	20,098	4.8
Lamar	316,800	8,162	2.6
Lauderdale	448,000	4,439	1.0
Lawrence	267,520	6,344	2.4
Leake	368,640	7,655	2.1
Lee	286,720	2,185	.8
Leflore	366,080	14,172	3.9
Lincoln	369,920	22,557	6.1
Lowndes	319,360	1,773	.6
Madison	464,000	1,846	.4
Marion	342,400	39,318	11.5

(Continued on next page)

TABLE 7. -- *Total state-owned lands as of January 1, 1934* -- Cont'd.

MISSISSIPPI[1]

County	Gross land area	Area of state-owned lands	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*
Marshall	440,960	8,545	1.9
Monroe	492,800	6,181	1.3
Montgomery	254,720	796	.3
Neshoba	359,040	8,842	2.5
Newton	363,520	12,743	3.5
Noxubee	436,480	256	.1
Oktibbeha	292,480	9,001	3.1
Panola	445,440	25,528	5.7
Pearl River	510,080	5,630	1.1
Perry	412,160	66,356	16.1
Pike	260,480	5,581	2.1
Pontotoc	316,160	10,692	3.4
Prentiss	261,760	3,654	1.4
Quitman	252,800	40,769	15.5
Rankin	506,240	19,090	3.8
Scott	282,080	6,595	1.7
Sharkey	270,080	30,081	11.4
Simpson	268,000	4,882	1.8
Smith	400,640	23,222	5.8
Stone	283,520	58,019	20.5
Sunflower	431,360	9,582	2.2
Tallahatchie	402,560	30,805	7.7
Tate	252,000	2,988	1.2
Tippah	285,440	1,016	.35
Tishomingo	273,920	3,438	1.2
Tunica	267,520	22,512	8.1
Union	263,680	404	.15
Walthall	248,960	8,278	3.3
Warren	366,080	12,957	3.5
Washington	462,720	22,143	4.8
Wayne	519,680	27,154	5.2
Webster	266,240	26,707	10.0
Wilkinson	426,880	578	.1
Winston	382,080	8,937	2.3
Yalobusha	313,600	6,685	2.1
Yazoo	579,200	17,012	2.9
State	29,671,680	1,331,116	4.5

[1] Inventory taken from Land Rolls of Land Commissioner's Office, and compiled by staff of State Land Planning Consultant for Mississippi.

TABLE 7. -- *Total state-owned lands as of January 1, 1934*

MISSISSIPPI [1]

County	Gross land area	Area of state-owned lands	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*
Adams	272,640	152	.05
Alcorn	247,040	2,112	.85
Amite	456,960	20,781	4.5
Attala	457,600	17,332	3.8
Benton	253,440	2,799	1.1
Bolivar	562,560	22,587	4.0
Calhoun	370,560	21,978	5.9
Carroll	399,360	9,227	2.3
Chickasaw	320,640	32,836	10.3
Choctaw	264,960	26,543	10.2
Claiborne	312,960	13,490	4.3
Clarke	432,000	13,110	3.1
Clay	261,120	25,568	9.8
Coahoma	339,200	12,651	3.8
Copiah	492,160	9,828	1.9
Covington	262,400	12,986	4.9
DeSoto	304,000	1,966	.65
Forest	295,680	12,132	4.1
Franklin	350,080	19,010	5.4
George	304,000	44,404	14.6
Greene	454,400	41,602	9.1
Grenada	282,880	8,717	3.1
Hancock	300,160	10,902	3.6
Harrison	364,800	25,081	6.9
Hinds	549,120	3,857	.6
Holmes	480,640	17,791	3.7
Humphreys	261,120	31,449	12.0
Issaquena	259,840	92,561	35.7
Itawamba	338,560	17,422	5.2
Jackson	454,400	45,633	10.1
Jasper	426,880	3,667	.9
Jefferson	324,480	2,644	.8
Jeff Davis	258,560	5,527	2.1
Jones	445,440	10,773	2.4
Kemper	481,280	15,791	3.3
Lafayette	424,960	20,098	4.8
Lamar	316,800	8,162	2.6
Lauderdale	448,000	4,439	1.0
Lawrence	267,520	6,344	2.4
Leake	368,640	7,655	2.1
Lee	286,720	2,185	.8
Leflore	366,080	14,172	3.9
Lincoln	369,920	22,557	6.1
Lowndes	319,360	1,773	.6
Madison	464,000	1,846	.4
Marion	342,400	39,318	11.5

(Continued on next page)

TABLE 7. -- *Total state-owned lands as of January 1, 1934* -- Cont'd.

MISSISSIPPI[1]

County	Gross land area	Area of state-owned lands	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*
Marshall	440,960	8,545	1.9
Monroe	492,800	6,181	1.3
Montgomery	254,720	796	.3
Neshoba	359,040	8,842	2.5
Newton	363,520	12,743	3.5
Noxubee	436,480	256	.1
Oktibbeha	292,480	9,001	3.1
Panola	445,440	25,528	5.7
Pearl River	510,080	5,630	1.1
Perry	412,160	66,356	16.1
Pike	260,480	5,581	2.1
Pontotoc	316,160	10,692	3.4
Prentiss	261,760	3,654	1.4
Quitman	252,800	40,769	15.5
Rankin	506,240	19,090	3.8
Scott	282,080	6,595	1.7
Sharkey	270,080	30,081	11.4
Simpson	268,000	4,882	1.8
Smith	400,640	23,222	5.8
Stone	283,520	58,019	20.5
Sunflower	431,360	9,582	2.2
Tallahatchie	402,560	30,805	7.7
Tate	252,000	2,988	1.2
Tippah	285,440	1,016	.35
Tishomingo	273,920	3,438	1.2
Tunica	267,520	22,512	8.1
Union	263,680	404	.15
Walthall	248,960	8,278	3.3
Warren	366,080	12,957	3.5
Washington	462,720	22,143	4.8
Wayne	519,680	27,154	5.2
Webster	266,240	26,707	10.0
Wilkinson	426,880	578	.1
Winston	382,080	8,937	2.3
Yalobusha	313,600	6,685	2.1
Yazoo	579,200	17,012	2.9
State	29,671,680	1,331,116	4.5

[1] Inventory taken from Land Rolls of Land Commissioner's Office, and compiled by staff of State Land Planning Consultant for Mississippi.

As of August, 1934, in these seventeen counties, there were 3,517,602 acres in tax default for three or more years. This represents 34.0 percent of their gross area, and indicates a degree of chronic delinquency comparable to that in Florida. The lowest percentage of area in tax default among these counties was 5.3 percent (Choctaw County) and the highest was 77.6 percent (Sequoyah County). Thirteen of the seventeen counties had 20 percent or more of their area in tax default for three or more years.

The cause of such a high degree of tax forfeiture in this region is undoubtedly closely related to the overcutting of the timber resources, coupled with difficulty of collection in the wild mountain country which comprises to a large degree one of America's last frontiers. Most of the tax default in this section occurs on the small farmer holdings rather than on the large corporate holdings which include much of the better timber and crop land. This may explain, in part, the high degree of long-term delinquency, since, while taxes average only about 10 to 12 cents per acre per year on all land except high-grade improved land, the economic balance of these small farmers is so unstable that any one of a dozen factors of misfortune can upset it for one year, leaving no funds for payment of taxes. The high interest (12 percent) accruing on taxes tends to prevent the subsequent payment of back taxes, interest, and costs. The result may well be complete loss of title, unless advantage is taken of the opportunity to repurchase one's own land, at whatever price one has to pay, at the time the county offers the tax-forfeited lands for resale at public auction.

In percentage of taxes currently delinquent for 1933, Oklahoma as a whole (entire state) ranked sixth among the eight states, with 25.5 percent.

TABLE 8. -- *Areas in tax default for three or more years, as of August, 1934*

EASTERN OKLAHOMA

County	Gross land area	Area in tax default[1]	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*
Adair	373,760	192,225	51.4
Atoka	638,080	366,028	57.4
Carter	531,840	290,192	54.6
Choctaw	505,600	27,000	5.3
Cherokee	493,440	195,529	39.6
Creek	615,680	159,700	25.9
Delaware	508.160	120,595	23.7
Haskell	393,600	157,276	40.0
Hughes	505,600	170,569	33.7
Latimer	470,400	329,249	70.0
LeFlore	1,032,960	212,062	20.5
Mayes	432,640	64,839	15.0
McCurtain	1,214,080	239,619	19.7
Pittsburg	876,800	391,083	44.6
Pushmataha	915,200	207,500	22.7
Seminole	405,120	50,000	12.3
Sequoyah	443,520	344,136	77.6
Total	10,356,480	3,517,602	34.0

[1] From data supplied by Regional Office, U. S. Forest Service, in connection with National Resources Board Report, for timbered counties only.

Texas

The data in Table 9 on Texas relate only to forty counties in the timbered eastern part of the state and to the area in tax default for three or more years. The area included in the survey is shown by the heavy boundary line on Figure 1.

As of August, 1934, in these forty counties there were 3,493,220 acres in tax default for three or more years, which is equivalent to 17.6 percent of their gross area. The lowest percentage of area in this condition in any one county was 2.4 percent in Jefferson County, and the highest was 41.9 percent in Cherokee County. Nineteen of the forty counties had 20 percent or more of their area in tax default.

TABLE 9. -- *Areas in tax default for three or more years as of August, 1934*

EASTERN TEXAS

County	Gross land area	Area in tax default[1]		County	Gross land area	Area in tax default[1]	
	Acres	*Acres*	*Percent*		*Acres*	*Acres*	*Percent*
Anderson	600,320	94,977	15.8	Nacogdoches	677,760	259,571	38.3
Angelina	601,600	77,863	12.9	Newton	568,960	28,123	4.9
Bowie	558,720	148,423	26.6	Orange	232,320	25,478	11.0
Brazos	382,080	67,335	17.6	Panola	538,880	35,836	6.7
Camp	132,480	41,532	31.3	Polk	778,880	222,000	28.5
Cass	608,640	57,821	9.5	Red River	664,960	101,074	15.2
Cherokee	671,360	281,428	41.9	Rusk	629,120	19,874	3.2
Franklin	184,960	52,713	28.5	Sabine	376,960	82,363	21.8
Gregg	199,680	5,910	3.0	San Augustine	398,080	97,508	24.5
Grimes	519,680	98,738	19.0	San Jacinto	385,280	109,806	28.5
Hardin	551,680	19,609	3.6	Shelby	533,120	47,715	9.0
Harrison	558,080	74,000	13.3	Smith	588,800	104,549	17.8
Henderson	605,440	149,543	24.7	Titus	254,720	69,642	27.3
Houston	787,840	181,552	23.0	Trinity	458,240	149,769	32.7
Jasper	525,920	36,575	5.8	Tyler	581,120	14,749	2.5
Jefferson	588,800	14,281	2.4	Upshur	384,000	72,960	19.0
Liberty	742,400	20,000	2.7	Van Zandt	531,840	121,259	22.8
Madison	316,800	80,093	25.3	Walker	506,240	105,366	20.8
Marion	250,240	33,194	13.3	Wood	420,480	95,869	22.8
Montgomery	650,880	157,349	24.2				
Morris	165,760	36,773	22.2	State	19,813,120	3,493,220	17.6

[1] From data supplied in part by Regional Office, in connection with National Resources Board Report, for timbered counties only.

There was no very definite grouping of those counties with high degrees of chronic delinquency. One irregular group lay in Bowie, Titus, Franklin, and Camp counties - in the shortleaf-loblolly pine-hardwood region north of the recently developed East Texas oil field, while a second irregular grouping included Cherokee, Nacogdoches, Trinity, Polk, and San Jacinto counties, which lie partly in the shortleaf-loblolly and partly in the longleaf pine type, southwest of the oil field.

Cause of tax default in these regions is primarily related, as usual, to removal of the original timber, which constituted the principal tax base, as well as to high taxes on the remaining land (from 15¢ to 25¢ per acre on cut-over land and up to $1.00 an acre on land and virgin timber). A reduction in income from agricultural crops during the depression has also contributed to this delinquency.

That the chronic tax delinquency; that is, that of three or more years' duration, is not more widespread is undoubtedly due to the fact that the prospects of subsurface mineral wealth are so great in this area that the owners feel justified in carrying the land for years without income from it in the hope and expectation of ultimately striking oil.

In respect to current 1933 delinquency, Texas, (for the entire state) ranked seventh among the eight states, with a current delinquency of 28 percent.

Summary and Conclusions

Chronic tax delinquency in the Gulf States as of 1934 involved more than thirty-one millions of acres, nearly 14 percent of the gross land area. In percentage of gross land area in tax default for three or more years, as of 1934, the Gulf States rank as follows: Florida, 34.7 percent; Oklahoma, 34.0 percent; Texas, 17.6 percent; Georgia, 12.0 percent; Louisiana, 11.9 percent; Arkansas, 8.5 percent; Mississippi, 4.5 percent; Alabama, 0.6 percent.

The causes for this high degree of chronic tax default are many, of course, and vary from state to state. The first cause is the decrease in income of property owners during the four years of depression. This lowering of income affected farmers, timbers owners and operators, naval stores operators, realtors, and other land owners in greater or less degree, and of course was an important factor in all states. This accounts for the increase in tax default in all states since 1930, but does not account for the variation between states comparable in resources, industry, and population.

This variation is primarily due to the differences in the laws governing tax delinquency and in law enforcement. In Alabama, as has been pointed out, the law itself imposes high interest (8 percent) on delinquent taxes, as well as penalty for non-payment, and provides for actual forfeiture of title in fact after two years from date of original delinquency.[7] In Georgia, on the other hand, no serious attempt is made to foreclose the tax liens, the county officials preferring to await payment at a subsequent date.[6] This difference in law and enforcement is undoubtedly the largest factor in the variation in tax defaulted area between these two states. Similar differences in enforcement and statute, which need not be considered here, account for the variation between Arkansas[4] and Mississippi, and between Alabama and Florida. One reason that tax default is not greater in Louisiana and Texas is that land owners there are holding their property for future mineral development. The chief reason for the high degree of chronic delinquency in Florida is the refusal of taxpayers to meet the high taxes imposed for debt service on the outstanding local bonds issued during the "boom".

On forest land, one primary cause of tax default, which is more or less common to all states, is the mismanagement and overexploitation of the timber, amounting in many cases to clear-cutting followed by fire, and leaving an area from which no income can be obtained for many years and on which the payment of annual taxes imposes an outlay the owners refuse to make.

---

[7] Redemption period changed in 1933 to three years if tax certificate held by private purchaser, and if held by State, until title passes out of State.

In percentage of the current delinquency outstanding as of December, 1933, the Southern States (including North and South Carolina and Tennessee in addition to the eight Gulf States) rank as shown in Table 10. This table also shows the respective rank of these states among the 48 states of the nation in respect to the same delinquency.

TABLE 10 -- *Rank of southern states in current tax delinquency for 1933 among all states of nation.*[1]

State	Percentage of 1932 levy delinquent as of December, 1933	Rank in nation
Louisiana	7.0	2
Alabama	11.5	9
Mississippi	12.0	10
Georgia	13.5	13
Tennessee	18.0	24
Arkansas	20.0	29
North Carolina	23.5	34
Oklahoma	25.5	36
South Carolina	27.0	38
Texas	28.0	40
Florida	36.0	45

[1] Data from reference cited in footnote 3 page 5.

In conclusion, there is little doubt that the revival in business and the increase in prices for farm and forest products which is now in evidence will result in a decrease in annual tax default in future years, and also in the restoration to private ownership of some lands now involved in three or more years' delinquency. This return to better conditions, however, will not prevent future serious delinquency in those states where little or no attempt is made to collect delinquent taxes. The solution of this problem is to revise the statutes of such states to insure fair and equitable taxation of all property, prompt foreclosure and loss of title after a reasonable period allowed for payment, and prompt, impartial, and just enforcement of these statutes. It is a problem which can best be solved by the states concerned.

The solution of the problem of tax forfeiture of forest lands and of submarginal agricultural lands lies first, in better management of such properties, with a view to perpetuating their crops rather than exploiting them once and then abandoning the land, and secondly, in development of sound land-use policies for all rural lands. On both of these solutions -- sustained-yield management and sound land-use policies -- the Southern Forest Experiment Station is now working in cooperation with other federal agencies and with the states.